



H.R. 729: THE COASTAL AND GREAT LAKES COMMUNITIES ENHANCEMENT ACT

Bill authorizes programs to help preserve coastal communities and natural habitats.

Summary of the Coastal and Great Lakes Communities Enhancement Act

H.R. 729 is a package of bipartisan bills that protects vulnerable coastal and Great Lakes communities impacted by the climate crisis. The bill creates programs to support Tribal, State, and local community projects that protect, restore, and preserve coastal zones and working waterfronts; helps communities prepare for and respond to climate change; and uses data to address coastal, ocean, and Great Lakes management. H.R. 729 also protects American commercial and recreational fisheries and the communities that depend on them by authorizing programs that preserve fish habitats and research Great Lakes fisheries management. The bill also strengthens our marine and coastal science and policy workforce by reauthorizing and updating the National Sea Grant College Program.

Messages

- This year, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) issued a Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate, making it clear our oceans and coasts urgently need protection. H.R. 729, which includes multiple bipartisan bills, protects coastal ecosystems and economies, improves ocean monitoring and research, and offers coastal managers tools and resources they need to protect coastal communities in the “splash zone” from climate impacts.
- We have a choice to make: we can either help coastal communities plan and prosper for a resilient future, or we can continue to delay and pay. 42 percent of Americans live in coastal counties. Working waterfronts employ more than 2 million people; Great Lakes fisheries alone support more than 75,000 jobs; and healthy fish habitats support a recreational fishing industry that provides more than 800,000 jobs. Coastal communities around the country are experiencing intense climate impacts, including severe weather events, sea level rise, chronic flooding, coastal erosion, and changing ocean conditions. Coastal communities and economies need to adapt for climate change.
- Living shorelines—which are being installed around the country to protect coastal communities and ecosystems – provide many benefits, including carbon sequestration, shoreline stabilization, and attenuation of coastal storms, currents, flooding, and wave energy. H.R. 729 establishes a grant program to help communities develop climate resilient living shoreline projects to protect themselves from climate impacts.
- Indigenous populations are disproportionately impacted by climate-related threats to public health, food security, and extreme weather events. H.R. 729 provides a funding mechanism through the Coastal Zone Management Act to improve Tribal coastal resilience. Approximately 27 federally recognized tribes representing about 270 miles of coastline will be eligible.
- This bill reauthorizes the Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS) led by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). IOOS is a coordinated network of people and technology that generates real-time data from the coasts, oceans, and Great Lakes. H.R. 729 also authorizes NOAA’s Digital Coast Partnership, a web-based collection of data, tools, and training resources that inform coastal managers making climate-related decisions. The bill authorizes funding for the U.S. Geological Survey’s Great Lakes Science Center to improve fishery science and technology, and also updates the National Sea Grant College Program to ensure the United States has a strong marine and coastal science and policy workforce.
- Rivers, streams, lakes, wetlands, coasts, and reefs in the United States have been fragmented, degraded, and destroyed. While inherently valuable for the preservation of species and diversity, these habitats also support a recreational fishing industry that provides more than 800,000 jobs across the United States. H.R. 729 authorizes a program to conserve these important fish habitats.

Bills included in the Coastal and Great Lakes Communities Enhancement Act Package

- *H.R. 729 - Tribal Coastal Resiliency Act (Kilmer, D-WA) – 14 cosponsors (11 Democratic; 3 Republican)*: Amends the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) to add a new section that authorizes a competitive grant program specifically for Indian Tribes. Grants would help Tribes develop and implement projects to protect, restore, and preserve areas of the coastal zone that hold important ecological, cultural, and sacred significance, or traditional, historic, and esthetic values essential to a Tribe; prepare and implement coastal area management plans; or implement a coastal or shoreline stabilization measure for the purpose of public safety, public access, or cultural or historical preservation.
- *H.R. 3115 - Living Shorelines Act (Pallone, D-NJ) – 43 cosponsors (37 Democratic; 6 Republican)*: Establishes a grant program to fund the design, implementation, and monitoring of climate resilient living shoreline projects intended to protect coastal communities and ecosystem functions from environmental conditions, particularly those impacted by climate change.
- *H.R. 3596 - Keep America's Waterfronts Working Act (Pingree, D-ME) – 12 cosponsors (10 Democratic; 2 Republican)*: Amends the CZMA to establish a working waterfront grant program to preserve and protect coastal access for water-dependent commercial activities. Working waterfronts are waterfront property, infrastructure, and waterways that provide access to coastal waters for people in commercial and recreational fishing businesses, boatbuilding, aquaculture, or other water-dependent activities. Working waterfronts are essential for fishing, shipping, and coastal tourism industries. Despite their economic value, working waterfronts are facing numerous threats, including pressure from competing land use plans, aging infrastructure, changing regulations, coastal hazards, and environmental impacts from climate change.
- *H.R. 2185 - District of Columbia Flood Prevention Act (Norton, D-DC) – 2 cosponsors (1 Democratic; 1 Republican)*: Amends the CZMA to add the District of Columbia to the definition of “coastal state” (16 U.S.C. 1453(4)), allowing the District of Columbia to develop and implement a coastal zone management program and be eligible for CZMA grant funding.
- *H.R. 3541 - Coastal State Climate Preparedness Act (Carbajal, D-CA) – 9 cosponsors (7 Democratic; 2 Republican)*: Designates funds specifically to be used for climate preparedness planning under the CZMA. Comprehensive adaptation plans through the CZMA will help states better understand the scope of the threat of climate change, identify state-wide costs, and develop local strategies to ensure safety for their residents.
- *H.R. 1747 - National Fish Habitat Conservation Through Partnerships Act (Wittman, R-VA) – 7 cosponsors (6 Democratic; 1 Republican)*: Codifies the National Fish Habitat Partnership, a program established in 2006 through a state-led public-private partnership at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The program is modeled after the North American Wetlands Conservation Act as well as the state-and-locally-led collaborative joint venture model to implement voluntary conservation action on the ground to conserve wildlife and fish habitats.
- *H.R. 1023 - Great Lakes Fishery Research Authorization Act (Quigley, D-IL) – 18 cosponsors (8 Democratic; 10 Republican)*: Authorizes the United States Geological Survey (USGS) to conduct science and research activities to support fishery management decisions in the Great Lakes. Funds will be used to restore the loss of basic fishery science capabilities, accelerate the development of invasive species controls and restoration of native species, and implement advanced autonomous and remote-sensing technologies.
- *H.R. 2189 – Digital Coast Act (Ruppersberger (D-MD) – 4 cosponsors (2 Democratic; 2 Republican)*: Authorizes NOAA's Digital Coast Partnership, a web-based collection of data, tools, and training resources designed to support coastal managers. This includes economic data, satellite imagery, visualization tools, and predictive tools from hundreds of sources across academia, non-governmental, federal, state, tribal, and county partners that help coastal communities better prepare for storms, flooding, and sea level rise, and strengthen coastal economic development planning efforts.
- *H.R. 1314 – Integrated Coastal and Ocean Observation System Act Amendments of 2019 (Young, R-AK) – 4 cosponsors (3 Democratic; 1 Republican)*: Reauthorizes the Integrated Coastal and Ocean Observation System Act of 2009, a national-regional partnership implemented by NOAA that provides important data to improve safety, enhance the economy, and protect the environment. IOOS generates and disseminates continuous data models and services on coastal waters, including the oceans and Great Lakes. These data, collected through buoys, water level gauges, and high-frequency radar, consist of information on environmental variables such as temperature, salinity, currents, nutrient concentrations, and contaminant levels, as well as other critical ecological factors.
- *H.R. 2405 - National Sea Grant College Program Amendments Act (Huffman, D-CA) – 48 cosponsors (40 Democratic; 8 Republican)*: Reauthorizes and updates the National Sea Grant College Program, increasing the efficacy of Sea Grant's educational, research, and extension programs. Sea Grant sends nearly 95 percent of its appropriated funds to coastal states for competitive grants that enhance the practical use and conservation of coastal, marine, and Great Lakes resources. For every federal dollar appropriated, Sea Grant leverages nearly \$3 from partnerships among state universities, state and local governments, and coastal communities and businesses.